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# The role of public administration in the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration

## Report of the Secretary-General**

*Summary*

The United Nations Millennium Declaration development goals cannot be implemented unless developing countries reinforce their democratic governance institutions; improve public sector human resources capacities; increase the efficiency and effectiveness of resource mobilization and financial administration; and foster information technology capacity-building in the public sector. It is increasingly recognized that many of the problems that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face are in great part a result of State capacity deficit, weak political democratic institutions and inefficient and badly run public administrations. Governance systems and institutions in many developing nations of the world are inadequate. In Africa, and in countries that have emerged from violent conflict, this situation is even more acute. The objective of the present report is to emphasize the vital importance that an effective public administration can play in achieving the development goals set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, as well as to present priority issues and strategic and programmatic recommendations for institutional and human resources capacity development, public sector financial management and information technology capacity-building. It also outlines proposed modalities for the work of the United Nations in support of the efforts of Member States.

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 56/213 of 21 December 2001, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to keep the developments in the field of public administration and development in Member States under constant review, to highlight changes and trends as well as successes in this area, with particular emphasis on the role of public administration in the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and to summarize his findings in a report to be submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, through the Economic and Social Council.

2. One of the main conclusions that can be extrapolated from the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the "road map" report of the Secretary-General, is that reinforcing State capacity and promoting good governance is the paramount factor in implementing the Millennium Declaration objectives. The problems that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face today, many of which result from State capacity deficit, weak institutions and inefficiently run public administrations, are now well recognized. Despite the progress made by many developing nations in building healthy institutions and protecting human rights, democracies in some regions of the world are still fragile and their institutions too weak to ensure effective governance.

3. Reinforcing governance and fostering an efficient public administration are, arguably, among the most important elements in the promotion of a country's national development agenda. Improving and reforming governance systems and institutions, including strengthening public sector capacity, is crucial in alleviating poverty, making globalization work for all, enhancing public participation at all levels of governance, protecting the environment, promoting sustainable development and preventing and managing violent conflicts. As underscored in the "road map" report of the Secretary-General, "the primary responsibility for guaranteeing the protection and well-being of the individual rests with the State" (A/56/326, para. 15).

4. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that "the millennium development goals become national goals and serve to increase the coherence and consistency of national policies and programmes" (ibid., para. 81). Democratic governance, which allows people to express their choices and hold Governments accountable for their actions, is thus essential for the achievement of the development goals set forward in the road map report. Although governance systems and institutions are relevant, they cannot fulfil their ultimate role unless they are rooted in a coherent value framework. It is important to note that by suggesting that everyone, especially those who have the power to make public policy choices, should refer in this process to a set of values that includes freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility, the United Nations Millennium Declaration represents a major paradigm shift in values.

5. In speaking about governance, however, one should adopt the widest possible definition, one which goes well beyond the sometimes narrow interpretation of "political" governance. Governance refers to the exercise of not only political but also economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. It encompasses and transcends the State to include the private sector and civil society organizations. As such, governance refers to the ability to manage the economy, mobilize resources, ensure a degree of social justice, promote an enabling environment for individual pursuits, as well as ensuring peace and security. In analysing the role of sound governance in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, it is necessary to focus on the cornerstones of the capacity to govern, which include institutional capacity, policy-making capacity, administrative/managerial capacity, financial capacity, human resources development and technological adequacy. These cornerstones have been defined by the group of experts on the United Nations Programme of Public Administration and Finance at their fourteenth and fifteenth sessions, held in New York in 1998 and 2000, respectively, and elaborated upon in the *World Public Sector Report 2001: Globalization and the State* (ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E/26). It is necessary to bear in mind that because "the problems facing humanity are closely intertwined, and each tends to complicate the solution of one or more others" (A/56/326, para. 3), Governments must adopt a coordinated and holistic approach to development. In order to achieve the Millennium development goals multisectoral programmes that tackle each of the goals simultaneously must be established.

6. In light of the above, the objective of the present report is to emphasize the vital importance that an effective public administration plays in achieving the development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration, as well as to present priority issues and strategic and programmatic recommendations for institutional and human resources capacity development, public sector financial management and information technology capacity-building in the public sector.

## II. Strengthening governance institutions

7. States have a central role to play in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Promoting human rights, democracy and good governance are among the best means to ensure that the Millennium Declaration objectives are achieved and that the values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility, to which Member States have committed themselves, are respected.

8. The first step in fostering democracy is to establish clear rules and procedures, that is to develop and/or reinforce democratic institutions — the building blocks of a democratic edifice. With regard to peace, security and disarmament, the first development goal, most of the violent conflicts that have rocked the world and curtailed efforts for development are not only the result of social injustice, but are also a consequence of failures in governance institutions and public administration systems. While efforts to stop violence where it has erupted are necessary, governance institutions should have the requisite institutional and human capacities to foresee possible sources of violent conflict and to avert them. Conflict prevention implies creating or reinforcing institutions that ensure the peaceful coexistence of all social forces within a given polity. Only by creating strong institutions that are able to mediate and channel diversity and conflict can there be lasting peace.

9. In post-violence situations, the re-establishment of public administration and governance systems is a sine qua non for the building of sustainable peace. The central challenge is that government institutions, which are among the first to disintegrate in violent conflict, must often be rebuilt from disarray, in ways that do not recreate the former conditions in which the seeds of conflict were sown. Violent conflict results in part from a failure of Governments to manage competing interests in ways acceptable to their civil society. Thus, the re-establishment of governance systems must embody structures and institutions and establish a balance of power to ensure that conflicts are managed sufficiently so that competing social groups do not become so disaffected as to resort to violence again.

10. Fostering development and poverty eradication, the second objective of the Millennium Declaration, also depends, inter alia, on good governance within each country and on the establishment of strong institutions. In this respect, one of the main preconditions to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration goals is that countries have in place effective and transparent legislative bodies that can adequately represent and articulate the demands of citizens, check the power of the executive through effective oversight and make consistent and coherent laws. Strengthening legislative bodies and ensuring that they are based on an efficient administration is of the utmost importance since they serve as the main forums for reaching agreements and formulating concrete solutions to compelling problems, including the eradication of poverty, improvement of health and education services, public security and administration of justice, as well as promoting the fight against corruption.

11. In most developing countries parliamentary institutional capacities are severely constrained. In order to perform at their best, legislative bodies need to be functional, accountable, informed, independent and representative. It is thus essential to support Member States in strengthening and institutionalizing democratic elections, parliamentary and electoral systems and processes by developing electoral management institutions and mechanisms; by reinforcing the organization and management of legislative bodies at national and local levels, by articulating a system of legislative offices at the constituency level and by fostering participatory dialogues that facilitate communication between the electorate and their representatives about policy initiatives and proposed legislation.

12. Protecting human rights and the vulnerable, another key objective of the Millennium Declaration, cannot be achieved unless countries have independent and well-functioning judicial systems. Reforming the

administration of justice is vital in ensuring that the majority does not trample upon the rights of the minority. It is also essential in minimizing impunity that often leads to insecurity, injustice, corruption and abuse of public office and power as well as discouragement of long-term investment. It ensures an effective system of checks and balances to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of one of the three branches of government and to protect minority groups.

13. Reforming the executive branch and ensuring that central agencies operate in an effective and coordinated manner is also a key ingredient in the achievement of the Millennium Declaration goals. The road map report underscored, in particular, the relationship between public sector management and the goal of poverty reduction, stressing that strategies for moving forward in halving, "by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's population whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger" include: (a) ensuring support for country-led economic and social initiatives that focus on poverty reduction; (b) strengthening capabilities to provide basic social services; and (c) assisting capacity-building for poverty assessment, monitoring and planning (see A/56/326, paras. 86, 108, 119 and 121). Alleviating poverty requires an efficient public administration and a multisectoral approach. Access to and provision of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities are vital and require efficient water management. Access to and the promotion of universal education, especially for women, is crucial in giving people the means to emerge from poverty and require the efficient administration of these services by the State. Access to health services is another fundamental ingredient in the fight against poverty. Diseases, malnutrition, lack of education and poor housing do not allow people to emerge from poverty. Decentralization in the framework of democracy and respect for human rights and freedoms can also be crucial in the reduction of poverty as it allows citizens to voice their demands in a more effective way and to be active partners in all stages of policy decision, implementation and evaluation.

## III. Public sector human resources capacity-building

14. Human resources development is a critical factor in ensuring that the development goals outlined in the road map report towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration are effectively achieved. Building public sector human capacities in terms of knowledge, skills, motivation and commitment, networks and mastery of information technology is crucial in order to be able to translate the values, objectives and goals of the Millennium Declaration into nationally-owned policies, strategies and action. The performance of the public sector depends on the efficient functioning of institutional structures as much as on the quality of the people who work in them. Skilled, dedicated and highly motivated public servants are essential for carrying out reforms that are responsive to changes both at the local and global levels and effective and sustainable in the long term.

15. Improvements in governance and in the performance of government services are not likely to occur without the overt and enthusiastic support of top leadership. Government leaders in a wide variety of institutions need to be technically competent, politically motivated and skilled in building consensus and partnerships. Both managerial and technical competencies are needed in order to translate a vision into strategies, programmes and activities for development. The improvement of leadership skills is thus key to achieving development successes, especially in a highly complex and volatile international environment.

16. Continuous learning and training in the public sector are an imperative in our turbulent environment, in which new challenges and opportunities arise with great frequency; traditional skills become obsolete; and more demands are made on Governments. The skills of public servants need to be constantly upgraded, their leadership qualities enhanced and new career structures developed, emphasizing mobility, integrity and professionalism so that countries may elaborate and implement reforms for social and economic development. Continuous learning in public organizations seems to be particularly necessary in the following areas: (a) expertise at all policy levels: technocratic knowledge should be replaced with a more interdisciplinary approach to policy-making, especially at the senior level; (b) managerial competencies: increased leadership skills, quality awareness, problem-solving tools and group process skills, such as leading meetings, teamwork and making presentations, are especially important in a learning organization, as

well as development of the negotiation and mediation skills crucial in an increasingly interdependent world; and (c) information technology: keeping up with the explosion in information and communication technologies challenges those in the public sector to constantly renew and upgrade their skills as well as to expand their competencies.

17. Most significantly, public officials should be trained to embrace a culture of learning and to see themselves as active agents of change. In the short run, this entails establishing incentives for those who want to learn. In the long run, learning should become an internalized value. This also applies to ethics in the public sector. The achievement of the Millennium development goals depends not only on a well-trained but also on an ethical civil service. Promoting ethics and combating corruption in the public sector directly contribute towards implementing many of the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. Public servants need to deliver public services and goods in an ethical manner. Any diversion of public resources into private pockets by malfeasance, misappropriation or conflict of interest directly reduces available resources for the achievement of development goals. Furthermore, systemic corruption results in the erosion of the rule of law, discourages private investment and erodes the legitimacy of democracy. The Millennium Declaration road map report mentions the need to combat corruption within the context of strengthening the international rule of law (A/56/326, para. 29), increasing private capital flow to finance development (ibid., para. 134), and allowing more genuine participation by all citizens (ibid., para. 218).

## IV. Financial capacity

18. In order to implement the Millennium Declaration goals, countries must not only have the capacity to hone a political vision and strategy for long-term development supported by a capable civil service and strong democratic institutions, but also need to have sufficient resources to implement such reforms and development programmes. Without adequate resources, even the most courageous reforms cannot be implemented. At the same time, mobilizing additional resources is not sufficient, per se, to promote development unless there is a strong political commitment and will to use those funds towards socially desirable objectives as well as efficient, public financial administration and management. The problem that many developing countries face is not only how to generate more resources, but how to ensure that resources are spent efficiently on projects that benefit the neediest in society. Improving public resources mobilization and management is above all an issue of good governance, not just a technical matter.

19. In fact, behind any technical approach — imported or homegrown — there must stand firm political will. Without such firm political will, based on a coalition of forces that see value in increased transparency, accountability and participation, the application of new technical approaches is bound to be forced and less than effective. The decision and consensus to increase participation and accountability must precede fiscal decentralization. The decision and consensus to curb corruption must precede relevant improvements in public expenditure management. The decision to curb bureaucratic capture must precede measures to increase expenditure control, strategic resource allocation, good operational management and due process. Furthermore, a changed relationship between the public at large and the Government and a consensus to increase accountability must precede measures that stretch the horizon of budgeting beyond the immediate future through a formal multi-year approach, when feasible, or, at a minimum, through systematic public reflection and dialogue. When we speak about the financial capacity of Governments, we must also include in this category the willingness and capacity to build political coalitions and generate political momentum for transparency, accountability and participation.

20. All this does not mean that technical solutions do not matter. In too many countries financial management capabilities have been eroded by the pursuit of financial populism, ineffective and distorted budgetary mechanisms or the breakdown of the existing financial management institutions. At the same time, there have been recent reforms in the public sector of both developed and developing countries[1] that warrant serious consideration of government policy makers seeking to increase macroeconomic stability and pursue an ambitious social agenda. Experience shows that most common technical weaknesses of the public financial management relate to untimely and inaccurate government accounting; budget review processes hampered by lack of relevant information; lack of modern methods of data management; highly

routine rules and procedures that stress control; and inadequate training. A separate set of weaknesses stem from financial management of projects funded externally.

21. The Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development[2] strengthened agreement on the policies required within developing countries to mobilize domestic resources, attract private investment and utilize aid effectively. It reaffirmed the importance of sound policies and good governance to ensure the effectiveness of official development assistance and emphasized country ownership, partnership and harmonization. It recognized also that substantial increases in ODA are required to enable the poorest countries to cut poverty in half and achieve other internationally agreed development goals. It is also encouraging that a new spirit of partnership and cooperation seems to be emerging between the recipient countries and the donor countries and institutions. It is vital that there be broad participation in these new partnership mechanisms and effective accountability systems to oversee those who participate in these new partnership arrangements.

22. Public financial management relates to the process of planning, programming and budgeting; budget execution and accounting; as well as auditing and evaluation of public resources. These government functions are aimed at ensuring that, to the maximum practical extent, the public resources — whether generated internally or externally — are utilized in accordance with the law and yield optimum results. Within this context, a central concern for all countries is how to harmonize methods for three linked, though somewhat distinct processes: (a) strategic macroeconomic management and control of aggregate financial variables; (b) changing expenditure priorities; and (c) effective and innovative management of service delivery institutions. Whether countries advance on the path of global economic integration and/or if they adopt an ambitious social agenda, which should be aligned with the United Nations Millennium Declaration goals, effective and efficient financial management is a must, especially in countries where the volume of tax revenue is fixed. It is incumbent upon those Governments to ensure that the resources mobilized are managed properly, with a view to sustaining economic growth and social development.

23. Improving mobilization of financial resources is also vital in many developing countries. In order to mobilize resources, countries must reform their tax systems by broadening their tax base; reducing tax-induced distortions; and adopting tax expenditure approaches which minimize the prospects for future fiscal deficits and are consistent with administrative capacities. In terms of tax policy, countries should ideally aim at setting up an efficient and fair tax system to raise essential revenue without excessive government borrowing, and should do so without discouraging economic activity or deviating radically from tax systems in other countries. Tax reforms should aim at simplicity, equity and comprehensiveness.

24. An efficient and effective tax administration is a basic prerequisite for a tax system to fulfil its revenue producing potential. Even the best-designed system is only as good as the administration that implements it. Governments that decide to undertake fiscal reforms should therefore also take into account the concomitant tax administration reform. The organizational structure of the tax administration should be such as to enable the tax administration to achieve the highest possible degree of voluntary taxpayer compliance as well as to administer the tax laws efficiently, effectively and fairly, with the highest degree of integrity. The strategies for tax administration reform are not in doubt: (a) simplification (for instance, the number of tax brackets in the income tax should be reduced and exemptions and deductions as far as possible eliminated); (b) need for a clear strategy of reform rather than ad hoc measures; (c) a high level of commitment to reform, particularly at the highest levels, but also embracing all concerned (the way a tax system is viewed depends on perception of the extent of evasion, fairness, complexity, arbitrariness and the burden of administration on taxpayers); and (d) technical competence on the part of tax administrators and staff of the entire tax system (competence not only enhances the chances of higher tax collections but also contributes to the trust and confidence of taxpayers).

25. There are additional important international tax-related matters that the international community can and should act quickly upon. For example, decisions on e-commerce taxation, on double taxation and transfer pricing can and should reflect the interest of the weaker participants in the global networked economy. Finally, there are important steps that countries can take to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their public

administrations. There are several technical approaches, including fiscal approaches, that have been tested worldwide — the lessons learned are well-known and documented. E-government solutions are multiplying and seem to be on many donors' priority list for technical cooperation. In times of scarcity of financial resources, efficiency can hardly be overestimated as a modality for getting more done with fewer resources.

## V. Public sector capacity-building in information, innovation and technology

26. The Millennium Declaration and the road map report call for numerous knowledge, innovation and technology (KIT)-related interventions, as well as for general KIT capacity-building at the national level. Together, they recognize these tools as critical inputs in meeting pressing development goals in the areas of governance, economic development, protection of the environment, poverty alleviation, health and the improvement of society as a whole.

27. While the promise of KIT is very real, as is evident from closer examination of sectoral and cross-cutting applications, unlocking its potential and realizing the equal distribution of its benefits requires a nuanced approach and a number of deliberate actions. Policy makers must consider the full continuum of a society's ability to produce, acquire, adapt, diffuse and appropriate knowledge, innovation and technology — existing, new, emerging, both indigenous and exogenous. This involves a number of substantive goals, policies, processes, actors, activities and structures. It is equally important that KIT also be directly connected to development policy, frameworks and strategies.

28. Government and public policy will be instrumental in bringing a KIT system to life. The exact nature of government intervention will depend on the local context and priorities. However, due to certain advantages that Governments enjoy, as well as to the challenge of market failure, it is clear that Governments can and should play a decisive role. In other key areas such as research and development, Governments must take a more active role by stimulating strategic investment in cases where serious underprovision occurs as a result of the inability or unwillingness of the private sector to invest. This is of particular importance in the application of a KIT system in the health-care sector, where technology and knowledge are critical inputs for combating HIV/AIDS, enhanced immunization and vaccination programmes and general strengthening of health-care systems. A government-led KIT system must not only adopt a strategic development of sectoral applications, policy and capacity, but should also identify synergies between and among sectors and cross-sectoral applications. In this regard, Governments should also lead by example and integrate KIT within their own operations, namely through e-government. Finally, Governments can build or facilitate the development of the underlying infrastructure for a KIT system, including human resources, the physical infrastructure, institutions, the necessary cultural and organization climate and adequate financial resources. While the challenges are considerable, the harnessing of technology, knowledge and innovation in order to implement the Millennium Declaration is necessary. Governments must treat building KIT capacity as a priority, if they are to meet the key Millennium Declaration goals by the 2015 deadline.

29. The Millennium Declaration calls on all Member States to ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technology (ICT) are available to all. The road map report describes ICT as being a potent instrument for accelerating broad-based growth and sustainable development and for reducing poverty. Within the recommended strategies for moving forward, the report cited the need to: promote universal and affordable access to ICT; create ICT for development strategies; support human resources development and institutional capacity-building; and build partnerships, including with the private sector. Moreover, the suggested reporting theme for 2004 is bridging the digital divide. ICT can be a tool in achieving almost every aspect of the Millennium Declaration goals, improving the quality, reach and timeliness of many development solutions and generally enhancing information and knowledge flows. Moreover, with regard to KIT, ICT can also be an instrumental tool in collaboration (especially across boundaries), knowledge-sharing and building and capacity development. Specifically, ICT plays a significant role in the innovation process because it can reduce cycle times, increase efficiency, codify and diffuse knowledge and ideas and provide

critical input to positive learning externalities through the recombination of ideas.

30. Because Governments play such a central role in the realization of the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration, developing their capabilities and effectiveness cannot be stressed enough. There are repeated references in the Declaration and road map report to good governance and democracy, including improved capacity for public service delivery of basic social services, public administration reform, integrated planning, increased citizen participation in decision-making, decentralization, transparency, accountability and combating corruption. While technology is not specifically mentioned, there are calls for innovation and new mechanisms for achieving those objectives. E-government and ICT are foremost among the innovative tools to realize improved capability in public administration. E-government has tremendous transformative potential if used in support of good governance objectives, and it can significantly change the way in which Governments approach their mandates, solve development problems and interact with other government agents, citizens and business. It can give rise to a new paradigm of governance: one that places citizens at the centre, responds to their needs and expectations and is based on the tenets of transparency, accountability, and participation.

31. E-government allows for greater transparency in government activities, processes and decision-making, and can reduce corruption, which is a significant barrier to development. Transparency can engender greater trust in government and a willingness of citizens to participate in the processes of governance, thereby improving the prospects for democratic governance. E-government also provides additional channels for social interaction and participation. The greater provision of information, as well as knowledge, also enables the policy maker and the citizen to make more informed and judicious decisions.

32. The introduction of e-government in developing countries is at its initial stages, although it is advancing quite rapidly. Defining an ICT regulatory framework, creating ICT infrastructure and providing connectivity and access to the Internet can be powerful obstacles to the establishment of e-government. At the same time, efforts to introduce information technology in government operations can provide an opportunity and an incentive to address and eliminate the above obstacles and thus help in bridging the digital gap. Experience has shown that as Governments respond to these challenges, the introduction of ICT proves revolutionary.

# VI. Role of the United Nations

33. The scope and complexity of the institutional and administrative reforms that would enable countries to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration can be seen from the overview contained in the preceding paragraphs. These reforms are not optional, but rather a pressing need, which should be addressed concurrently with the development of sectoral and multisectoral national strategies.

34. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/213, in the coming year the United Nations will focus its activities in public administration on assisting Member States, especially developing countries and countries in transition, in carrying out those reforms that can maximize their capacity to implement the goals of the Declaration. Most of the reforms are of a cross-sectoral nature and affect all governance and administrative systems (for example parliamentary reform and civil service reform) but others should be more focused on individual sectors and aimed at strengthening specific capacities (including the health, education and social sectors).

35. The specific approach to work in the field of public administration being used by the Secretariat, in line with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 50/225 and 56/213, will be further adapted to respond to the needs emerging from the preceding analysis as shown in the following sections.

## A. Advocacy

36. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration has inscribed in its agenda for its 2002 meeting an in-depth review of the role of public administration in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The result of this analysis will be widely disseminated to Member States, but should be further deepened in order to better understand the multifaceted relationship between public administration and the implementation of the Millennium goals. **In particular, specific sectoral reviews of the institutional and administrative strengthening required in areas such as health and**

**education should be carried out. At the same time, the Secretariat will focus the work of its expert group meetings, seminars and conferences on issues instrumental to the implementation of the Declaration.**

37. It has been recognized that the global diversity of practices, cultures and viewpoints only serve to reinforce the need for building consensus on core issues of importance and for building networks to facilitate debate among policy makers and administrators. Upon the recommendation of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, the Economic and Social Council, in its decision 2000/231, endorsed the proclamation of United Nations Public Service Day to celebrate the value and the virtue to the community at the local, regional and global levels. **It is recommended that 23 June be designated as United Nations Public Service Day and that, on that day, countries be encouraged to organize special events to highlight the special role of public service in the development process.**

## B. Developing analytical and policy tools

38. The need to provide data and analytical tools to enable policy makers to take informed and sound decisions cannot be overemphasized. The Secretariat intends to continue developing such analytical tools, in particular by:

(a) Carrying out sectoral capacity assessments in the priority areas identified in the Millennium Declaration;

(b) Utilizing the *World Public Sector Report* to provide guidelines in the areas instrumental for the implementation of the Declaration;

(c) Developing guidelines and "how-to" tools for intervention in specific sectors.

## C. Building common understanding

39. Recognizing the importance of building a common understanding among Member States and of sharing valuable experiences, the General Assembly, in paragraph 4 of resolution 56/213, of 21 December 2001, requested the Secretary-General to study the possibility of periodically bringing together high-level policy makers responsible for public administration reform, under the auspices of the United Nations, to discuss issues of common interest and share valuable experiences and practice, and to report on the results of that study to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. In this respect, the attention of the Assembly is drawn to the fact that the Secretariat has been supportive from the substantive point of view of the Global Forum on Reinventing Government, which has, over the years, become a global gathering of high-level policy makers in public administration to exchange views and experiences related to the process of reform in public administration. The Government hosting the forum defrays all the costs of the event and voluntary funding is sought to cover the participation of representatives from developing countries, particularly those from least developed ones. Such support was provided for the organization of the forums held in Brasilia in 2000, in Naples, Italy, in 2001 and in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 2002.[3] **The Secretariat could continue its substantive support of the existing process, bringing together, in a coordinated manner, the inputs of the United Nations system as a whole.** These arrangements would fulfil the spirit of the recommendation of the General Assembly in a flexible manner, limit administrative involvement on the part of the Secretariat and build on existing successful partnerships. The forum can provide a useful opportunity to discuss institutional and administrative issues related to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. For example, the forthcoming forum, to be held in Marrakesh in December 2002, will focus on how partnerships between citizens, businesses and Governments can foster development and democracy.

## D. Providing assistance in institution-building

40. To assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to build appropriate legislative and policy frameworks, as well as institutions capable of facilitating the implementation of the Millennium Declaration goals, should be a priority of the United Nations. In this respect, **the United Nations should focus on supporting Member States in: (a) strengthening and institutionalizing democratic elections, parliamentary and electoral systems and processes; (b) reinforcing the administration of justice both at the national and local levels; (c) modernizing the public sector and improving**

**public service delivery; (d) reinforcing decentralization and local governments capacity; (e) developing and/or strengthening institutions and procedures for the peaceful management of conflicts; and (f) providing support to African Governments, in close collaboration with regional bodies and institutions as well as international organizations, in their efforts to implement strategies for poverty eradication.**

41. **The United Nations should also assist Member States in: (a) enhancing the mobilization of financial resources through tax systems reforms that aim at simplicity, fairness and comprehensiveness; (b) promoting an effective financial administration; and (c) improving financial management and expenditure by increasing allocative efficiency and equity, as well as technical efficiency in the use of budgeted resources.**

42. **Finally, the United Nations should provide support to Member States in their efforts to: (a) put in place an information technology framework that is highly contextualized, responsive to local needs and linked to human development; (b) create an enabling environment for academia, civil society, private sectors and communities to develop and benefit from knowledge, innovation and technology; (c) develop e-government strategies, policies and activities; and (d) build partnerships at the local and international level to benefit from the latest developments in the field of information technology.**

## E. Providing assistance in human resources development

43. As outlined in paragraphs 18 to 23 above, human resources development is a critical factor in ensuring the implementation of the Millennium Declaration goals. **The United Nations can play a pivotal role in assisting Member States to: (a) improve leadership and management skills through leadership development strategies and mechanisms, including high-level seminars and colloquia; (b) design and deliver training through innovative methods; (c) increase public service use of ICT to monitor performance, as well as to promote learning, improve service delivery and increase access to information by both public servants and citizens; (d) develop an ethics infrastructure in the public sector, including codes of ethics and conduct for public sector employees; (e) implement and monitor instruments such as the Charter for the Public Service in Africa as well as other initiatives that can contribute to improving human resources capacity-building in African countries.**

## F. Information-sharing and exchange of experiences

44. The potential of the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) to collect, organize and disseminate information relevant to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration goals should be tapped. The network is already a powerful tool utilized by public offices, policy makers, public administration institutions and experts to access global knowledge in public administration. The number of network users has reached 720,000 per month. The Secretariat is endeavouring to expand the network to strengthen the capacity of national ministries and institutions of public administration to access information, experiences and practices and to receive online advisory services and training, as requested by General Assembly resolution 56/213. **In this process, particular attention should be given to collecting and disseminating information and experiences relevant to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The advisory services and the online training component of UNPAN should also be strengthened and focused in this direction.**

## G. Coordination of development assistance in public administration

45. In this area, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have worked in partnership to prepare an inventory of all governance and public administration programmes in the African region. This inventory is a powerful tool for all development assistance actors in this field for creating partnerships, avoiding duplication and reinforcing complementarity of programmes. It is also an invaluable tool for Governments to monitor progress in strengthening governance and public administration as well as in setting priorities when programming. **Such inventory should be extended to other regions and further focused on specific capacity-building initiatives**

**related to the implementation of the Millennium goals.** In recent years development assistance partners have been stressing the importance of transparency and accountability in the management of development assistance resources. The public administration sectors in recipient countries have a key role in ensuring that resources made available are utilized in an efficient, effective and transparent manner and that appropriate accountability systems are instituted. A pilot initiative on "aid management and accountability", carried out a few years ago by the Secretariat, brought together recipient countries and donor agencies to simplify and harmonize accountability requirements, promote transparency and identify capacity-building needs. **This pilot initiative should be revived and expanded in order to create the necessary conditions to build strong trust between recipient and donor partners with the goal of encouraging the flow of additional resources for the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.**

46. The Secretariat, which regularly sponsors consultative meetings of the agencies active in public administration, will devote the next consultative meeting to developing a coordinated approach to activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of public administration in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. A number of agencies have carried out noteworthy initiatives in their respective sectoral areas, which can be accessed at the following web address, www.unpan.org/dpepa_GAreport.asp, by interested delegations.

*Notes*

[1] These reforms, commonly known as "new public management", aim at improving public sector efficiency and effectiveness. They include, inter alia, "hands-on professional management" in the public sector, explicit standards and measures of performance, stress on greater discipline and control over resource use and stress on private sector style of management practices.

[2] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[3] The first Global Forum on Reinventing Government was organized in 1999 by the Government of the United States of America. This event provided a platform for discussion among high-level policy makers on the role of Governments at the outset of the new millennium. The second Global Forum, which was hosted by the Government of Brazil, took place in Brasilia in May 2000, focusing on the theme "Democratic State and governance in the twenty-first century". In March 2001, the Government of Italy organized the third Global Forum on "Fostering Democracy and Development through e-Government" in Naples. The fourth Global Forum is currently being organized by the Government of Morocco, with the support of the United Nations in coordination with other international institutions.